United Nations A/54/165

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 July 1999

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Item 118 of the provisional agenda*
Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

Hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly a letter dated 29 June 1999 from the Chairman of the Board of Auditors transmitting the comments of the Board on the report of the Secretary-General on the hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat submitted in accordance with section VIII of General Assembly resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999.

* A/54/150.

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Annex

Letter dated 29 June 1999 from the Chairman of the Board of Auditors addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the comments of the Board of Auditors on the report of the Secretary-General on the hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat submitted in accordance with section VIII, paragraph 3, of General Assembly resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999 (see appendix).

(*Signed*) Osei Tutu **Prempeh**
Auditor General of Ghana
and Chairman
United Nations Board of Auditors

Appendix

Comments of the Board of Auditors on the report of the Secretary-General on the hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat

Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in section VIII, paragraph 3, of its resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999, reiterated its request that the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, as endorsed in resolution 51/226 of 25 April 1997 and 53/204 of 18 December 1998 on the hiring and use of consultants, be fully implemented, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report through the Board to the Assembly at the main part of its fifty-fourth session. The recommendations of the Board of Auditors are contained in its reports to the General Assembly.[1]

2. The present paper sets out the views of the Board of Auditors on the report of the Secretary-General on the hiring and use of consultants in the Secretariat (A/54/164) as requested by the General Assembly.

3. The report of the Secretary-General addresses, in paragraph 2, the five recommendations in the reports of the Board as referred to above. Those recommendations were as follows:

(a) **Recommendation 1.** The terms of reference of consultants should be prepared more precisely, including objectives, targets and output delivery dates. Necessary guidelines should be issued to all requesting organizations and departments;

(b) **Recommendation 2.** To ensure selection of consultants on a more competitive basis, all proposals for consideration of a sole candidate for recruitment should be actively discouraged. Appropriate norms should be established for selection of consultants from a wider geographical base;

(c) **Recommendation 3.** Requisitioning units should be required to plan their project and programme personnel requirements in advance and provide adequate lead time to the various personnel services within the Organization so that proper recruitment action can be taken in compliance with the established rules;

(d) **Recommendation 4.** Recruitment officers in the Department for Development Support and Management Services (now the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) should be given improved access to comparative information on consultants' fees. The basis for fixing the remuneration of consultants should be recorded;

(e) **Recommendation 5.** The assessment form on consultants should be reviewed to make it more detailed and to indicate more clearly the quality of the consultant's work and consultant's ability to undertake future assignments.

Comments of the Board of Auditors

4. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/226 of 3 April 1997 and decision 52/475 of 31 March 1998, the Secretary-General issued comprehensive policy guidelines on the terms of reference, selection, hiring and renewal of consultants. The Board welcomes the issuance of the comprehensive guidelines, which are contained in document A/53/385 of

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 5* (A/51/5), vol. I; and ibid., *Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 5* (A/53/5), vol. I.

15 September 1998, and which substantially addressed the issues and concerns raised by the Board in its reports.

5. During its ongoing audits of consultants, the Board intends to monitor the application of the guidelines by departments, as well as the implementation of recommendations on the need to plan their project and programme personnel requirements in advance and to provide adequate lead time for recruitment action by the various personnel services and the fixing of remuneration of consultants.

6. The Board looks forward to the introduction of Release 5 of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), which will enable the Secretariat to identify candidates on a broader basis through a worldwide exchange of information. This should provide the Secretariat with a better means to secure a wider geographical distribution of consultancies.

7. With regard to evaluation of consultants' performance, the Board notes that the Administration proposes to introduce a detailed evaluation form to measure the quality of work performed and to take into account the goals established in the terms of reference as well as compliance with delivery dates. In this connection, the Board notes that Release 5 of IMIS would also facilitate the integration of evaluations of consultants' performance into the central occupational rosters for worldwide use.

8. In conclusion, the Board welcomes the action taken by the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations of the Board. The Board considers that such action will strengthen the Secretariat's ability to recruit, manage and evaluate consultants in the most cost-effective and equitable manner.

Acknowledgement

9. The Board of Auditors wishes to express its appreciation for the cooperation and assistance extended by the Secretary-General, his officers and staff.

(*Signed*) Osei Tutu **Prempeh**
Auditor General of Ghana

(*Signed*) Sir John **Bourn**
Comptroller and Auditor General
of the United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern Ireland

(*Signed*) Vijay Krishna **Shunglu**
Comptroller and Auditor General of India